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EIU 4100-001: Senior Seminar: Folklore, Culture, and Society

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EIU 4100G, Section 01
Senior Seminar: Folklore, Culture, and Society

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 Office Hours: M-F 11-12, 1-2, and by appt.

Tu 6-8:30 PM
 307 Coleman

Course Description

Through a comparative examination of various folk groups and genres, this course will address the ways in which folklore contributes to the beliefs traditions, and behaviors of individuals and societies. Special attention will be paid to contemporary folklore research and its relevance to the story and understanding of modern societies.

In terms of format, I like to see a lively class. I will do whatever I can to keep you awake and involved and interested. Don't be surprised to see a lot of small group interaction and a variety of activities. I do *not* want to hear myself talk for 150 minutes a week and I doubt you do either!

Because this is a senior seminar, I make certain assumptions: that you will be active discussants, that you will keep up with the reading and writing assignments, and that you will take initiative in your research and out of class assignments. I expect to see the best that EIU juniors and seniors can do!

Course Objectives

- ❖ To learn the role folklore plays in our everyday lives
- ❖ To learn the impact of folklore on human behavior
- ❖ To exercise your abilities to summarize and synthesize information from scholarly sources of various disciplines and from interdisciplinary materials
- ❖ To have opportunities to make oral presentations of these summaries and syntheses
- ❖ To learn to conduct interdisciplinary folklore research using both primary and secondary sources
- ❖ To learn how to best communicate these research findings in oral and written form
- ❖ To learn to collect, study, analyze, and compare folklore from their own culture and those of other groups
- ❖ To learn the importance of folkloristics (the study of folklore) in understanding cross-cultural interactions
- ❖ To learn the importance of folkloristics as a basis for social action
- ❖ To enjoy!

Texts

Brunvand, *The Big Book of Urban Legends*

Fine, *Manufacturing Tales*

Georges and Jones, *Folkloristics*

Yolen, *Favorite Folktales from Around the World*

(Also: various articles and chapters of books read outside of class)

Grade Breakdown:

Response journals	200 points
Article summaries & presentations	100 points
Short paper	100 points
Term paper	300 points
Discussion	200 points
<u>Presentation</u>	<u>100 points</u>
Total	1000 points

Course Grade Calculator:

901-1000 points	A
801-900 points	B
701-800 points	C
601-700 points	D
0-600 points	F

Words of Advice on Grades: Adequate, Average work will earn you a 'C' in this course. If you merely go through the motions, but do so with a certain amount of skill, you are an average (i.e. 'C') student. If you merely go through the motions without much skill, you may very well earn a 'D'; missing deadlines consistently or racking up lots of absences (see absence policy below) may also lead to a 'D'. Good work, i.e. extra effort and good quality product will earn you a 'B.' Excellent work, i.e. going above and beyond the requirements for assignments, using both skill and creativity, should earn you an 'A.' Keep in mind that doing an assignment is no guarantee of an 'A' or 'B'—you must also do it well. If you are shooting for a particular grade in this course, I advise that you come see me *early* so we can discuss how you might best achieve that grade. I do *not* care what grade you *need*; I will do whatever I can to help you *earn* the grade you *want*.

Students with Disabilities

If you have a documented disability and wish to discuss academic accommodations, please contact the Office of disability Services at 581-6583 (9th St. Hall).

Attendance

I take attendance each class period, but there are no points assigned to attendance itself. Instead, you are allowed one absence with no questions asked. After that, each absence will mean a deduction in 25 points in your course grade. Of course, extended illnesses and emergencies will be accommodated, but I also expect you to use your absence wisely. Don't skip class at the beginning of the semester and then expect me to be sympathetic later on if you get sick. You are responsible for taking care of your own absences: getting the notes from a classmate, getting any handouts and assignments from me. It is obviously in your best interest to attend class every time because you will *always* miss something if you do not. For some of the participation points you will miss by missing class, I will allow you to attend appropriate campus events and report on them. No absences will be allowed during weeks 12, 14, 15 or during the final exam period.

Assignment Summary (More detailed assignment sheets forthcoming)

Response Journal

Each week during the semester, you will be expected to write 500 words in a response journal, documenting what you think about the reading and discussions and bringing in examples from your personal experience. I will pick these up periodically for evaluation purposes; grades will be based not so much on grammar and style, but on the thought and reflection displayed in the writing. You may start with what you like and don't like about a particular story or what you find strange, but then take the discussion deeper, trying to interpret the meaning and function of the story, comparing it to other things we read or to theoretical perspectives.

Article Summary/Presentation

Each member of the class will read two articles or chapters of books outside of class, summarize them in written form, and present the information to the class informally, through discussion and handouts. We will make assignments and develop a presentation schedule on January 16.

Short Essay and Term Paper

The short essay (approximately 5 pages) will be due on February 13. It will be a discussion of a particular topic in folklore, based on class work, library and internet research. It will serve as a prospectus for the fifteen-page term paper; the longer paper will entail both library research and fieldwork. The five-page essay will be returned after preliminary evaluation for further revision and expansion into the research paper. In addition, you are advised to consult with me often during the writing process. Papers will be evaluated on focus, organization, research, development, style, and mechanics. I will ask for two copies of the research papers so that I can keep them on file.

Project Presentations

During weeks 14, 15 and finals week, each student will present his/her research to the class, and we will discuss the presentations. Presentations will be evaluated on organization, language, material, delivery, analysis, and voice.

SYLLABUS

(readings should be *completed* by the date on which they are listed)

- Tu Jan 9 **Introduction to Folklore and Folkloristics**
- Definitions
 - Identifying folk groups
 - “Everyfolk” vs. the “Intentional Folklorist”
 - How can understanding folklore make us more at home in the world?
 - The relevance of Folkloristics to other academic areas

Unit 1: Folklore as Tradition; the Survival and Continuity of Cultures

- ❖ This unit covers the way folklore works—how it travels over time, how oral traditions differ from literate dissemination of lore, how the Internet influences modern folklore—and folklore’s role in preserving traditions, establishing continuity, and influencing change.

- Tu Jan 16 *Folkloristics*, Chapter 1 (“Introduction: Folklore and Its Study”)
Folkloristics, Chapter 3 (“Survival, Continuity, Revival, and Historical Source”)

- Tu Jan 23 *Folkloristics*, Chapter 5 (“The Dissemination of Folklore”)
Manufacturing Tales, Chapters 4 (“Coke lore and Coke Law: Urban Belief Tales and the Problem of Multiple Origins”) and 5 (“Folklore Diffusion Through Interactive Social Networks: conduits in a Preadolescent Community”)

Unit 2: Folklore as Transmissible Entity

- ❖ This unit reviews the genres of folklore, paying particular attention to the verbal and material genres and how they are collected, classified, and analyzed. The focus of week 6 (Feb 13) will be how verbal folklore (i.e. folk and fairy tales, myth and legends, riddles and proverbs) is adapted over time and through cross-cultural transmission.

- Tu Jan 30 *Folkloristics*, Chapter 4 (“Folklore as Genre and Type”)
Favorite Folktales, Introduction and “Telling Tales,” pp. 1-45

- Tu Feb 6 *Favorite Folktales*, readings to be determined
Example exchange: proverbs, euphemisms, stories, riddles, songs

- Tu Feb 13 *Favorite Folktales*, readings to be determined

Unit 3: Folklore as Culture

- ❖ This unit explores folklore as a facet of and basis for culture. Particular attention will be paid to the role of folklore in the interactions among different cultures.

- Tu Feb 20 *Folkloristics*, Chapter 6 (“Folklore in Cultural Contexts”)
Manufacturing Tales, Chapter 6 (“The Kentucky Fried Rat: Legends and Modern Society”)

Tu	Feb 27	<i>Folkloristics</i> , Chapter 7 ("Folklore in the Cultures of Groups in Contact") <i>Manufacturing Tales</i> , Chapter 8 ("Mercantile Legends and the World Economy: Dangerous Imports from the Third World")
Tu	Mar 6	<i>Manufacturing Tales</i> , Chapters 7 ("The Goliath Effect: Corporate Dominance and Mercantile Legends") and 9 ("Among those Dark Satanic Mills: Rumors of Kooks, Cults, and Corporations")
Tu	Mar 13	SPRING BREAK

Unit 4: Folklore as Behavior

- ❖ This unit will explore the role of belief and tradition in influencing human behavior. Psychological theories of folklore, political analyses of folklore, and the relationship between folklore and religion all will be introduced as means of exploring the connections between folklore and everyday life.

Tu	Mar 20	<i>Folkloristics</i> , Chapter 8 ("Folklore and Human Psychology") <i>Manufacturing Tales</i> , Chapter 1 ("Evaluating Psychoanalytic Folklore: Are Freudians Ever Right?")
Tu	Mar 27	<i>Manufacturing Tales</i> , Chapters 2 ("The Promiscuous Cheerleader: An Adolescent Male Legend") and 3 ("Welcome to the World of AIDS: Fantasies of Female Revenge")
Tu	Apr 3	TASKS test
Tu	Apr 10	<i>Folkloristics</i> , Chapter 9 ("Folklore as Personal Resource") Projects due
Tu	Apr 17	Project Presentations and Discussion
Tu	Apr 24	Project Presentations and Discussion
Tu	May 1	Project Presentations and Discussion